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Landmines Blow!

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Landmines Blow!

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Landmines and cluster munitions kill or injure thousands of people each year, while also restricting access to water and agriculture necessary to maintain health, income and greater livelihood sustainability. Eighty percent of the world's nations have joined the *Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and their Destruction* (also known as the Anti-Personnel Mine Treaty or APMBT), agreeing to stop producing and using anti-personnel landmines. However, the threat from mines remains high. Additionally, cluster bombs and other unexploded ordnance continue to threaten local populations.¹ As of 2010, landmines still affected 66 countries and seven areas,² with cluster munitions continuing to impact at least 23 countries and three areas.³



Origin of Landmines Blow!

In 2003, Alison Bock founded the nongovernmental organization Landmines Blow!⁴ to raise awareness about landmines and their impact on civilians. As part of this mission, organization members write articles and speak about landmines and cluster-munitions at schools, organizations, businesses, clubs and churches. Landmines Blow! also does presentations on other peace and security topics, including global health, the global water crisis, refugee resettlement and the empowerment of women. In 2004, the organization was invited to join the Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement in the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Political-Military Affairs' (PM/WRA) Public-Private Partnership program.

Help to Others

In addition to increasing awareness, Landmines Blow! links mine-action and development activities through a program that provides mine-affected communities access to clean, safe water.

Mine clearance is an issue of security but also involves major socioeconomic and development impacts, such as the provision of land, water and safety for poor farming families in rural areas. Landmines Blow! provides mine-affected communities access to clean, safe water, domestic hygiene training, well maintenance education and water testing.



The investment in education, training and follow-up with recipients, as well as ongoing maintenance of the wells, helps to ensure project sustainability.

More than 125 million children under age five do not have a reliably safe source of drinking water. Consequently, diarrhea remains the largest single cause of illness and death worldwide. To help alleviate these unnecessary deaths and injuries, Landmines Blow! drills wells and builds durable, weather-resistant pumps that provide clean water to mine-affected communities for approximately US\$1,500 each. As a result of proper monitoring, all of the wells built by Landmines Blow! are still fully functioning after five years.

These wells save time that would have otherwise been spent carrying water long distances. This time saved can instead be spent on agriculture, tending animals or income-generating activities, such as spinning cotton for sale at markets. Women are able to send their children to school as a result of not

needing children to help with water collection. Both health and hygiene improves across the community. Additionally, the wells provide families with ongoing access to clean water which can be used for drinking, cooking, bathing, washing clothes and watering livestock. The wastewater from the wells is used for home gardening. Common diseases such as diarrhea are less likely to occur and children do not need to travel through areas littered with landmines to collect water. In addition, local village chiefs and leaders help decide the number and location of wells and appoint locals to serve on community water committees.

Success

In Cambodia, the initial safe-water project allowed for the construction of 10 wells in the Srey Snam district, providing clean water to approximately 1,800 refugees and displaced persons, many of whom were landmine survivors. In the interim, Landmines Blow! completed construction of 10 additional wells with funds raised entirely by volunteers. To date, the organization provides safe water to more than 4,000 Cambodian refugees, displaced persons and landmine survivors. In addition, Landmines Blow! works to elevate and promote the status of Cambodian women via the formation of Water Point Committees with 50 percent of the members represented by women.

Long term, Landmines Blow! aims to replicate these successes in other mine-affected communities. 🌐

~ Landmines Blow! and CISR staff

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Endnotes

1. "Major Findings." Global Landmines Overview 2010-2011." *Landmine & Cluster Munition Monitor*. http://www.the-monitor.org/index.php/publications/display?url=lm/2011/es/Major_Findings.html. Accessed 8 February 2012.
2. In this context, the term "area" means a politically disputed territory that is not internationally recognizedâ€"Kosovo, Palestine, and Somaliland, for example.
3. "The Issues: Frequently Asked Questions." *Landmine & Cluster Munition Monitor*. <http://www.the-monitor.org/index.php/LM/The-Issues/FAQs>. Accessed 8 February 2012.
4. "About Us." *Landmines Blow*. http://www.landminesblow.com/About_Us.html. Accessed 8 February 2012.

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